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A NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE and DEATH OF *Edward Chester*,

By his Wife
ELIZABETH CHESTER.

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A NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE and DEATH OF *Edward, Cheſter*, &c.

Concerning my dear deceaſed Huſband, Edward Cheſter, *this brief Account I have to give, and this Teſtimony I bear.*

HE was Religiouſly Inclined from his youth, having his Converſation then, for the moſt part, among the People called Baptiſts.

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About

About the Seventeenth year of his age his Father dying Inteſtate, his Mother (who was a Religious Woman) committed the Care and Ordering of her Trade to him; which he readily undertook for her, and for Twelve years together managed her Buſineſs with ſo much Care, Diligence and Faithfulneſs: that he improved the Eſtate, and left her more for her other Children (which were Five in number, all younger than himſelf) than their Father could have given them if he had made a will. A good Example to young men, ſo concerned.

When he was about Eighteen years of Age, he joyned in Communion with thoſe People called Baptiſts; and was in ſuch Eſteem with the chief of them hereabouts, that I (who was then a Hearer of them alſo) have heard them ſay, He was likely to be a Teacher amongſt them: And they wold often be putting him forward, to

Exerciſe his Gift amongſt them (as their manner of ſpeaking was.) But I have heard him ſay, He waited for a ſtronger. and more powerful Impulſe upon his Spirit. Yet ſometimes, through their Importunity, he hath undertaken it in their private meetings; but it brought Trouble upon his Spirit, and an uneaſy Exerciſe on his mind: for he was not ſatisfied with the Outſide of Religion; but his Spirit travelled after the Enjoyment of the Inward Subſtance; an Hunger being begotten in him after that Bread that comes down from Heaven, and a Thirſting after that water that Springs up to Eternal Life, which, as a Fountain, was to be ſet open to waſh in from Sin, and from Uncleanneſs.

While thus his mind was inwardly Exerciſed towards the Lord, with breathing Deſires after him; the Lord was graciouſly pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf unto him in Love, and with Power: ſo that (as I have often

often ſince heard him ſay) He was Convinced of the bleſſed Truth by his own Fire-ſide, as he ſat alone, bemoaning himſelf, and Crying to the Lord for Power to overcome thoſe ſins, which did ſo ſecretly and eaſily beſet. And while he was under this Exerciſe of mind, the Doctrine of the Croſs of Chriſt was opened to him, by the Illuminating Spirit of God; whereby he clearly ſaw, and was fully ſatisfied, that the way to know, and witneſs Redemption, and Salvation from ſin, was to take up the daily Croſs: that which crucifies us to the world, and the world to us, and which Crucifies the Fleſh, with the Affections and Luſts; and ſo to follow Chriſt Jeſus. And when the Senſe of this was imprinted in his mind, he cryed within himſelf, Alaſs, Have I been a Profeſſor of Religion ſo long; and have not yet known the Power of the Croſs of Chriſt! Have I read the Holy Scriptures ſo often;

and have they been to me all this while but as a Sealed Book!

Some little time before this, He had heard of a People in the *North*, who profeſſed the Light, and inward manifeſtation of the Spirit of Truth, to be their Guide and Teacher; and he had a great Deſire to know them: and Providence ſo ordered it, that it was not long before One *John Askew* (a Friend of *London*) brought a young man to his houſe (he hath ſince thought it to be *Richard Farnſworth*) with whom he had Conference, to his great Satisfaction. And thereupon expreſſing a Deſire to have more Acquaintance with thoſe People (then in ſcorn called Quakers) many of them afterwards called upon him; and his Heart being opened by the Lord, his Houſe was opened alſo to receive, and entertain the Servants of the Lord; in a time when they could hardly get Entertainment in ſome places, for their money.

And

And now that he gave up to follow the Lord, it pleaſed the Lord to bleſs him, both Inwardly and Outwardly; ſo that he was increaſed in the things of this world, and Grew in the Knowledge and Obedience of the Truth: and was alſo inabled to ſuffer for the ſame; both in the Spoiling of his Goods, and the Impriſoning of his Body. For being had before the Juſtices (in *Oliver Cromwell's* time) for bearing his Teſtimony againſt that great Oppreſſion, *Tithes*; and not having Freedom to put off his Hat unto them, he was committed for keeping on his Hat: and was the Firſt that was ſent to *Bedford-Goal* on Truths Account.

He hath often ſince been a Priſoner; but not long; at a time: for being (becauſe of his Innocent Life, and his peaceable and loving behaviour) beloved by moſt that knew him, both Juſtices, and neighbours; his neighbours were always uneaſy, when he ſuffered. And one even

of his Perſecutors, was ſo reſtleſs, when he was in Goal; that he went from Juſtice to Juſtice, to get him diſcharged: and would not come home without him; ſo mightily did the Lord work for his Deliverance. But he always came forth clear in his Teſtimony, through the Lords Aſſiſtance to whom be the glory.

About a year after his Convincement (which was in or about the year 1654.) It pleaſed the Lord, in his tender Love, and great Compaſſion to my poor Soul, to beget in me alſo a Senſe, of my want of the right Knowledge of a Saviour, to ſave and preſerve me from my Sins. For through the Lord's mercy to me, I could read the Holy Scriptures, and was pretty well acquainted with the literal Senſe thereof: yet I found I wanted the Knowledge of that, which could give me Power, and ſtrength to fulfill them; which yet I ſaw to be my Duty, and that without it I

was

was not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. This brought a great Exerciſe upon my mind; and I may truly ſay, By night, on my Bed, I ſought him whom my ſoul longed after, but I knew not where to find him: which brought me Nights of Sorrow, for my miſ-ſpent Days; though I had never been addicted to groſs Evils, having had my Education amongſt a ſober ſort of People.

In this State, the Lord was graciouſly pleaſed to hear the Cry, and regard the Panting of my poor Soul, which had breathed after him, even in my tender years. And bleſſed be his great and powerful name, he did appear, in the needful time, and turned my mind inward, through the Powerful and Effectual Preaching of thoſe (then contemptible) People called Quakers.

For by this time, there were Metings ſettled, both at *Market-Street*, at *Sewell*, and at *Dunſtable*; where my dear Husband and I were Two

of

of about Twelve that, for ſome time, met together, till the Lord increaſed our Number. But not on eof thoſe Twelve (who firſt ſate down there together to wait upon the Lord) doth now remain on this ſide the Grave, but my ſelf only: the reſt having laid down their Heads, I hope, in peace with the Lord.

After our little number was ſomewhat increaſed we ſat together ſtill, for the moſt part, in ſilence; not having a word ſpoken among us for ſome months together. But ſome times ſome Miniſtring Friend was ſent by the Lord to viſit us, with a living Teſtimony; whereby we were both incouraged to wait upon the Lord, and directed where and how to wait, ſo as we might find him, and be accepted of him. And the Lords Preſence and Power being that we waited for; bleſſed be his Name, he never ſent us altogether Empty away: though ſometimes we waited long, before he

he brake forth in his Tendering Power, and Conſolating Love; which yet, when it did break forth, brought down into true Humility and Tenderneſs, and begat in us a ſtrong Deſire, and Cry after more of the ſame. And I can truly ſay, It was a good Day: for the bleſſed Truth prevailed and proſpered.

Now after we had thus walked together, for ſeveral years, in the Profeſſion of the bleſſed Truth; my dear Husband and I took Each other in Marriage, on the Nineteenth day of the Fifth month, in the year 1663. And being the Firſt that were married amongſt Friends, in our Meeting, or in this County of *Bedford* (that we have ever heard of) we had no Track to follow; and that good Order and Method, which is now eſtabliſhed amongſt Friends, was then wanting. Wherefore we took each other in a publick Meeting, and had a Certificate thereof, ſigned by about ſeven Friends of the Meeting: And

through

through the Lord's Aſſiſtance, we joyned in that, which cauſed us to love, and to be Faithful Each to the Other, until death.

About two years after, *viz.* in the year 1665. it pleaſed the Lord to bring my dear Husband forth in a Miniſtring Teſtimony amongſt Friends; declaring what the Lord had done for his Soul, ſetting forth the great Love of God to loſt Man, and Exhorting all to come unto, and perſevere in the bleſſed way of Truth, that they might inherit everlaſting Life. And truly his honeſt, plain Teſtimony made ſuch Impreſſion on the People, and begat ſuch Tenderneſs in them, that the Remembrance thereof reſts upon me, with ſweet Satisfaction.

From that time forward, as the Lord by his conſtraining Love, drew him forth, and gave him utterance, he laboured in the ſervice of Truth: and had great Travel upon his Spirit for the Meetings (more eſpecially) to which he belonged,

longed, which were *Market-Street* and *Sewell*; where moſtly his Service lay. Yet ſometimes he had Drawings, to viſit Friends in other Meetings: but had always a tender Regard and Care, that he might not make that little Diſpenſation (as he uſed modeſtly to call it) of the Goſpel, which was committed to him, chargeable to any. He had beſides a great Travel upon his Spirit, for the Recovery (if it might be) of thoſe that profeſſed the Holy Truth; and yet walked diſorderly, or not according to it.

What a tender dear and loving Husband he was to me, I want Words to expreſs. But this I can, with good Aſſurance, ſay, We were true Yoke-Fellows, and Meet-Helps one to the other; and our Love increaſed to the laſt: for it ſtood not in the affectionate, or natural part only; but was grounded in that, which endures for ever. Which made me deſire of the Lord, That I might be throughly Reſigned, and

and kept Subject to his heavenly will, for therein only could I have any Satisfaction in parting with my dear Husband; conſidering that my Loſs was his greatly-deſired Gain: even that he might be in the full Fruition of Divine Love, in the Heavenly Manſions; where the Wicked ceaſe to trouble, and the weary are at reſt. Bleſſed be the great Name of the Lord, who now, as well as formerly, hath made, in meaſure, hard things Eaſy, and bitter things Sweet.

In the time of his great and laſt Weakneſs, he had many good and comfortable Expreſſions; though it was troubleſome to him to ſpeak: And my memory and Hearing being ſomewhat decayed; I am not in a Capacity to give a full Account thereof. Yet I remember, He would often ſay, *He felt more of the Love of God, than he could expreſs*: and he much deſired Stilneſs, and inward Retirement; ſaying, *He knew the worth of a quiet Habitation.*

I felt

I felt him in that Love of God, Which ſurpaſſes the Love of all things here below. In which Love we were joyned together by the Lord: and in the ſame conſolating Love, the Lord was pleaſed to ſeparate us; by taking him to himſelf, on the 23d day of the 12th Month 1707. in the 74th year of his Age. And now my deſire is that I, and the Children he hath left behind him, may follow him in that ſtraight and narrow way, which he took delight to walk in; until we alſo arrive at our Journie's End, in true Peace with the Lord.

This is ſomewhat that was upon my mind to write, as a Commemoration of the Lord's gracious Dealings with my dear Husband *Edward Cheſter*. Some of which I knew by my own Obſervation, ſince I became his Wife; and ſome things I had from his own Mouth, when we have diſcourſed together, in the Remembrance, and Contemplation

plation of the Lord's Goodneſs to us in our tender Years: which was often in his mind, and which he would ſpeak of with great Delight, As How the Lord ſhed abroad his Love in our Hearts, when we were but young, which drew us to love him again, and not to think any thing too dear to part with, for his name and Truth's ſake. And ſurely, we had good Cauſe to ſay, He remembred the Kindneſs of our Youth, when we followed him in a Land that was not ſown, through pricking Briars and ſcratching Thorns. But hitherto he hath been; as the Support of our youth, ſo the Stay of our old age: and hath helped my dear Companion to conquer, and to be more than a Conqueror, through Jeſus Chriſt that loved him. And that it may be ſo with me alſo, and with all that love the Truth in ſincerity, is the earneſt Deſire, and fervent Breathing of my Soul to God

Dunſtable the 31 of the
First month 1708.

Elizabeth Cheſter.

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